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A Thanksgiving day address delivered in...

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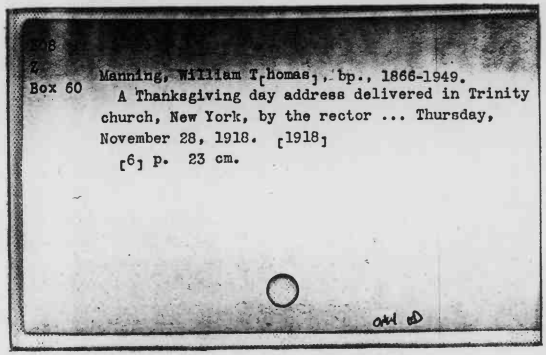

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A Thanksgiving Day Address

Delivered in

Trinity Church, New York

By the Rector

William T. Manning, S. T. D.

Thursday, November 28, 1918

Feb. 1, 1919 AET

We have never known a Thanksgiving Day like this one. Heretofore this day has been one of thankfulness for the blessings of peace and plenty and liberty here in our own land. To-day we offer our thanks to Almighty God for the preservation of justice and freedom for all mankind.

1. We thank God to-day for deliverance from the greatest peril which has threatened the world since history began.

The triumph of Prussian autocracy would have meant the overthrow of all the progress that this world has made since the coming of Jesus Christ. It would have meant the enthronement of brutal might, the downfall of democracy and brotherhood, the chaining and enslaving of the human spirit for centuries to come.

2. We thank God for the soundness of mind and heart shown by the American people as a whole in this great day of crisis. Our people have never held back. Whenever the leaders were ready to act the people have been more than ready to follow. Our people have not once hesitated when the call came. They have given their life, their wealth, their energy, with a willingness, and a lavishness, that have known no limit.

The mind and conscience of the American people were sound in their insistent demand that there should be no terms with Germany but unconditional surrender. Their instinct is equally sound in demanding, as they do now emphatically demand, that there shall be no compromise of the principles of stern justice in the peace settlement, and that through no adroit diplomacy of our enemies shall we for one moment be made the mouthpiece of German pleas and claims against our friends and

allies and brothers in arms who have borne such unparalleled sacrifices in the cause of right.

3. We thank God for the great and needed lessons that this war has taught us. There are too many of these even to mention. This solemn experience of war has remade us. It has reawakened our moral sense, renewed our ideals, called forth in us a new spirit of service. It has brought us back to plainer living and clearer thinking. We see more clearly than ever the dangers and evils of militarism; but we see also the dangers of that sentimental, immoral pacifism into which we had been carried much too far. We see clearly now that if we love right and freedom, we must be willing, and also prepared, to defend them with our lives if need be. The response made by our people to this call to war is the vindication of Democracy.

It was believed by some that Democracy would not fight to defend its life and its ideals against attack. The spirit of our boys at the front, and the spirit of our whole people, has silenced that fear forever.

But for the saving of our sons' lives, let us see to it that we are never again found unprotected, unprepared, and not even willing to prepare, as we were when this great crisis met us. Let us now adopt, as a permanent part of our life, a moderate system of Universal Military Training. I say this not only from the standpoint of its military value, but also from the standpoint of its moral and spiritual value for our young men. It will be our greatest possible insurance against war. It will be a great nation-wide school of training in character, in loyal citizenship, in true democracy.

The old argument of the pacifists that military training necessarily leads to war has been sufficiently refuted by experience. That argument has cost the world untold blood and sorrow in the past four years. If England had been prepared on land as she was on the water, and if our country had been even moderately prepared, how different the story would have been! In that case, Germany would never have started on her wild orgy of crime, or if she had done so, she would speedily have been stopped.

It was Britain's preparation on the sea which saved us and the world from disaster.

We do not want a great standing army in this country. What we need is a people trained and prepared for their own defense in case of need. It is this which a wise and moderate system of Universal Training like that of Switzerland will give us.

4. In conclusion let me speak a word of warning. We thank God to-day for the overthrow of one great peril to the world. There is another enemy among us. There is one enemy which is even more abhorrent and more vile than Prussian Autocracy. It is the movement that we have come to speak of as Bolshevism.

We have no reason to be alarmed at this menace. Our freedom-loving people will tolerate no such foul thing among us. But we have good reason to be on guard. We have reason to watch the tendencies in this direction which are manifest in some high places. We have reason to watch the cleverly-edited magazines of high class, the loose-minded and notoriety-hunting intellectuals, the time-serving politicians, the disloyal jellow journals which are lending themselves to this propaganda. "Place none but Americans on guard to-night." That is the spirit in which we must do our part now. It is time to call things by their true names. The leaders of the Bolshevist movement in Russia are a band of criminals such as the world has rarely seen. They stand convicted by their deeds. Any in this land who defend or uphold them must be recognized and regarded accordingly.

It is time for true Americans to speak out unhesitatingly for those principles of justice, of liberty, of order, of equal opportunity, of individual independence and initiative, upon which our national life is founded, and to make it clear beyond all misunderstanding that in this free land there is no place for any German propaganda of Bolshevism nor for its disgraceful symbol, the Red Flag.

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